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Research paper

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## MODERN MARRIAGE AND WEDDING RITUALS OF THE DARGINS-TSUDAHARS: TRADITIONS AND INNOVATIONS

*Abstract.* Based on field ethnographic material collected in the Levashinsky district of Dagestan in 2018 and 2022, using historical-comparative, typological, systemic, retrospective methods and the method of participant observation, the paper discusses the traditional and modern wedding ceremonies and customs of the rural population of one of the sub-ethnic groups of the Dargins – the Tsudahars<sup>1</sup>. This group has undergone the cultural influence of the Avars of the Gunibsky and Gergebilsky districts and the Laks of the Laksy district, which is reflected in interethnic marriage, the spread of Avar anthroponymy, Avar khinkal, Avar and Lak music, songs and dances among the Tsudahar Dargins. The rituals of the life cycle of the Tsudahars, as well as other Dagestanis and North Caucasians, were influenced by the sociocultural processes of the late 20th – early 21st centuries, associated with “perestroika”, a change in the paradigm of the state and social structure of Russia, another Russian modernization and urbanization, which directly or indirectly modified them. The study shows that, despite the influence of globalization and transformation processes, almost all the main stages, characters, rituals and customs of the traditional Tsudahar wedding were mostly preserved only in rural areas. Relics of early forms of religions and ancient forms of marriage are still found in the modern Tsudahar wedding. The custom of mutual assistance has fully preserved, which makes it possible to mitigate the burden of material expenses for the wedding. Since the beginning of the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to date, the need to reduce financial costs and the growing influence of the Muslim religion have led to the popularization of non-alcoholic weddings and the holding of wedding mawlid, replacing traditional wedding rituals with religious ones. In our time, real conditions have been created for the revival of some of the lost original elements of the Tsudahar wedding. The preservation of most of the traditional elements of the modern Tsudahar wedding inspires certain confidence in the preservation of their ethnic and cultural identity in the era of globalization.

*Keywords:* Peoples of Dagestan; Tsudahars; wedding; socio-cultural processes; globalization.

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Исследовательская статья

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## СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ БРАК И СВАДЕБНЫЕ ОБРЯДЫ ДАРГИНЦЕВ-ЦУДАХАРЦЕВ: ТРАДИЦИИ И ИННОВАЦИИ

*Аннотация.* В статье на основе собранного в Левашинском районе Дагестана в 2018 и 2022 гг. полевого этнографического материала с использованием историко-сравнительного, типологического, системного, ретроспективного методов и метода включенного наблюдения, описываются традиционные и современные свадебные обряды и обычаи сельского населения одной из субэтнических групп даргинцев – цудахарцев, расселенных в этноконтактной зоне и испытавших культурное влияние аварцев Гунибского и Гергебильского районов и лакцев Лакского района, что отразилось на межнациональной брачности, распространении у даргинцев Цудахарии аварской антропимии, аварского хинкала, аварской и лакской музыки, песен и танцев. На обряды жизненного цикла цудахарцев, как и других дагестанцев и северокавказцев, оказали влияние социокультурные процессы конца XX – начала XXI в., связанные с «перестройкой», сменой парадигмы государственного и общественного устройства России, очередной российской модернизацией и урбанизацией, прямо или косвенно видоизменившие их. Анализ исследуемой темы показал, что несмотря на влияние глобализационных и трансформационных процессов, почти все главные этапы, персонажи, обряды и обычаи традиционной цудахарской свадьбы в основном сохранились только в сельской местности. В современной свадьбе цудахарцев всё ещё встречаются реликты ранних форм религий и древних форм брака. В полной мере сохраняется обычай взаимопомощи, позволяющий смягчить бремя материальных расходов на свадьбу. С начала 90-х гг. XX в. и по настоящее время необходимость сокращения материальных расходов и возрастание влияния мусульманской религии привели к появлению безалкогольных свадеб и проведению свадебных *мавлидов*, заменяющих традиционную свадебную обрядность на религиозную. В наше время созданы реальные условия для возрождения некоторых утраченных самобытных элементов цудахарской свадьбы. Сбережение большинства традиционных элементов современной свадьбы цудахарцев вселяет определенную уверенность в сохранении их этнической и культурной идентичности в эпоху глобализации.

*Ключевые слова:* народы Дагестана; цудахарцы; свадьба; социокультурные процессы; глобализация.

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## *Introduction*

The analysis of marriage, wedding and related traditions, customs and rituals play an important role in the study of the history, culture and life of a certain ethnic group. Marriage and wedding rites are more stable than other elements of folk life and preserve the historically established features of ethnic culture. Their study in dynamics, comparison and correlation (traditional and modern) is of great scientific interest and is relevant in the context of globalization and socio-cultural processes of the last 30 years. Our paper aims to describe the modern marriage and wedding ceremony of the Dargins-Tsudahars, taking into account traditions and new customs.

Based on the field ethnographic material, collected in 2018 and 2022 in the native villages of Tsudahars (Tsudahar, Kuppa, Irgali, Khadzhalmakhi, Tashkapur, Ubeki, Arshi, Karekadani, Musulte), applying historical-comparative, typological, systematic, retrospective methods and participant observation, the paper describes traditional and modern wedding rites and customs. It is important to note that the Tsudahars living in the cities hold their weddings in the banquet halls, but basically retaining the structure and individual elements of the traditional wedding ceremony.

Unfolded from the second half of the 80s of 20th century and continued into the early 21st century sociocultural processes associated with “perestroika”, the collapse of the USSR, a paradigm shift in the state and social structure of Russia, another Russian modernization, the acceleration of urbanization, globalization, ideological freedom, the rejection of the worldview stamps and stereotypes that had developed in the Soviet era, social and property stratification had a great influence on all aspects of economic activities, culture and life of Russians. Transformation processes have not bypassed the family life of the peoples of Dagestan and the wedding, maternity and funeral rites and customs associated with it [1, p. 369].

The publications of A.J. Magomedov are dedicated to modern Dagestan wedding as a cultural phenomenon in the era of globalization, as well as Islamic innovations in the modern wedding of the peoples of Dagestan and the North Caucasus [2, p. 305–317; 3, p. 60–72].

A detailed study of the entire cycle of pre-wedding, wedding and post-wedding customs and rituals of the modern Dagestan wedding was carried out by a group of Dagestan ethnologists [4, p. 176–199].

The study of traditional, Soviet and modern Dargin wedding rites is covered in the works of A.I. Aliev [5, p. 120–124], M.Yu. Kurbanov [6, p. 71–80], I.I. Omarov and R.I. Seferbekov [7], F.A. Gadzhalova [8, p. 167–195], et al. However, over the past quarter of a century, modern wedding ceremonies of the Tsudahar people have not attracted attention, which explains the novelty of our study.

The study of the culture and life of the Tsudahars is also of scientific interest in terms of studying the everyday culture of this unique sub-ethnic group of the Dargins, which have long lived in the ethno-contact zone on the border of the settlement of the Avars of the Gunibsky and Geregebilsky regions and the Laks of the Laksky region. Ethnocultural mutual influences led to the enrichment of the cultures of the contacting ethnic groups and were reflected in numerous interethnic marriages (mostly between the Tsudahars and Avars), the popularization of the Avar khinkal among the Tsudahars, Avar anthroponymy, and the performance of Avar and Lak songs and music at weddings.

The scientific value of our work lies in the analysis of the structure and content of the modern Tsudahar wedding, which, as a result of the influence of socio-cultural processes of recent decades, has undergone a certain transformation, retained traditional elements and acquired new customs. This can be useful when writing dissertations, summarizing articles and monographs on modern rituals of the life cycle of the peoples of Dagestan, the North Caucasus and Russia.

The analysis of the modern Tsudahar wedding, which has undergone a transformation, might be of great interest to Russian and foreign ethnology, and many traditional elements preserved in the rituals of the life cycle of the Tsudahar people give hope for the preservation of their ethnic and cultural identity in the era of globalization.

## *Marriage*

Many features of the marriage and family relations of the Tsudahars are characteristic for the majority of the Caucasian peoples. One of their peculiarities is that they still adhere to strict endogamy. According to M.A. Aglarov, the law according to which marriage was concluded between a young man and a girl only of the same *tuhum* and village, was formed in Dagestan in the early Middle Ages [9, pp. 116–120]. Marriages with other sub-ethnic groups of the Dargins (Akushins, Urahins, Mekegins) among Tsudahars are not common. As for inter-ethnic marriages, they are mainly concluded with the neighboring Avars of the Gunibsky and Gergebilsky districts, with whom the Tsudahars have had long good-neighborly relations. In Soviet times, in the 40s and 60s, when the Russian specialists began to arrive in the Tsudaharsky district, Tsudahar residents started to marry with them. For instance, the residents of the village Kuppa Rabadanov Gimmat and Nizamutdinov Gadzhi married Russian teachers during this period. Today, Russian Slavic girls are married only if they convert to Islam.

Previously, the prerogative of marriage belonged to the parents of a young man and a girl. When marrying a girl, the consent of her father or guardian, or rural qadi was required [10, p. 32]. The desire of a young man and a girl to marry was still listened to, because a loveless marriage was considered short. If a girl insisted on her unwillingness to marry an unloved person, then her parents jokingly told her: “In that case, we will send you to choose a papaha to the Tsudahar bazaar.” Here the papakha symbolically replaced the person. It is possible that this playful suggestion survived to us is a relic of an ancient custom, when the marriage initiative came from a girl [11, pp. 58–62].

In the past, the marriage age for girls was 12-13 years, and for young men – 15-16 years [5, p. 121]. Now girls are married at the age of 18-20 years, and boys get married at 20-25 years. Polygamy among Dargins was quite a rare phenomenon. Only wealthier individuals had more than one wife.

As everywhere in Dagestan [12, 143–161], in the past, the Tsudahars practiced cradle betrothal, arrangement between the parents of young children. There was a levirate (marriage with the wife of the deceased brother) and a sororate (marriage to the sister of the deceased wife). Marriages where brothers of one family married sisters from another were also practiced. For example, three Khisbulaev brothers from Arshi married three sisters. In Kuppa, a mother and her daughter married a father and son from the village of Sanamahi.

Marriage by abduction among the Tsudahars was an exception rather than a rule, and was regulated by the Adat code [13, pp. 116–117]. In the Soviet and post-Soviet times, cases of bride abduction from Tsudahars were rare. Such marriages are not approved and condemned by the people, since they can lead to a conflict situation if the abducted girl does not want to marry the kidnapper or her relatives are against such a marriage.

Sharia marriage (“*nikah*”, “*mahar*”) and divorce (Arab. “*talak*”; Tsudahar “*zu kayshviz*”) still exist and are supplemented by civil marriage and divorce. In general, divorces among the Tsudahars are extremely rare. In case of divorce, the wife returns to her parents, and children usually stay with their father. A divorced woman takes her dowry and presents made to her during the wedding.

As in the past, marriages between foster brothers and sisters, relatives by adoption, twinning and other types of artificial kinship are not allowed.

### ***Wedding ceremony***

A wedding ceremony implies not one ritual action, but a whole complex of rituals and rites performed by the family-related collectives of the bride and groom upon their marriage [14, p. 36]. A modern Dargin wedding is both a family and a social event, full of rituals, symbolic actions, songs and dances. It includes both traditional elements and new customs. Currently, peoples of Dagestan [4, p. 177], and Dargins in particular, practice three types of weddings. The first type, which most rural Dargins adhere to prior early 2000s, is largely traditional, with minor innovations. The second type contains new, modern elements, while traditional ceremonies are partially observed. The third type, which has become popular since the 2000s till present, exists in the form of a wedding mawlid.<sup>1</sup>

*Matchmaking* (“*Ssukne barhni*” – “*Sending matchmakers*”). The wedding cycle of the peoples of Dagestan consists of three main parts: betrothal – the actual conclusion of marriage, religious registration of marriage, and the wedding – its ceremonial manifestation [17, p. 131]. In Soviet times, close relatives acted as matchmakers, and in the last 30 years this function has usually been served by the parents of a young man. Having entered the house of the girl’s parents, the matchmakers declare the purpose of their visit. The parents of the girls do not immediately accept the proposal. They usually hesitate in their answer (“we need to consult with the elders”, “we haven’t thought about the daughter’s marriage yet”, “it’s too early for her to get married”). After a few days, the matchmakers visit them again, and in some cases several times more, until they get a positive answer. A negative answer (“Do not come here again!”) is usually given right away. The girl is not present at the matchmaking.

With a favorable outcome of the agreement, the young man’s parents give the opposite side an initial gift (a piece of cloth, a headscarf, a golden or silver bracelet, a luxury watch, a sum of money), which confirms the consent of the girl’s parents. Interestingly, in the past, the Tsudahars did not present a ring, since there was a bad sign that otherwise the wedding might not happen. Apparently, this sign is based on the belief in the magical binding of the

1. Mawlid – an event held by Muslims to celebrate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Ayats and suras of the Koran, poetic narrations about the life of Muhammad, his prophetic mission are cited at the mawlid. Today, family holidays are also called mawlid, accompanied by the citing of Qur’anic texts and timed to coincide with significant events of a family or community – the birth of a child, a wedding, moving to a new home, etc. Mawlid symbolizes the significance of the event, its sacral, valuable significance in the space of the daily life of the family [ 15, p. 329; 16, p. 163].



groom on the wedding night, and in a broader sense – from the taboo on knots and rings [18, p. 271–276]. Now a diamond ring, among other gifts, is presented to the bride during the matchmaking.

From the moment of accepting the gift, the young man and the girl are officially considered the bride and groom (“gyalmag’e” – “betrothed”, “arranged”). The young couple avoid casual meetings on the street, and if they suddenly happen, they do not talk to each other. If the bride speaks to the groom on the street, then this act is regarded as her unwillingness to marry this young man (Khadzhalmakhi, Tashkapur).

During the matchmaking, they also agree on the wedding date. Matchmakers, leaving the bride’s house, are to steal something (a broom, a spoon, dishes). Then the stolen thing is given to the groom with the words: “Here, the bride gave it to you.”

*Dressmaking (“Darchi dirsni”).* Shortly prior to the wedding, the groom’s relatives with pieces of cloth, shawls, sets of clothes and jewelry depart to the bride’s house. In the past, during this ceremony, they indeed cut and sewed clothes for the bride. Now the cuts on the cloth are made symbolically. This is a kind of demonstration of the bride’s dowry and gifts made to her by the relatives of both sides. This event is jokingly called the “women’s holiday” (“*hhunralla meh*”).

After the demonstration of gifts (cuts of cloth, shawls, sets of clothes), they are put in one pile and the child is rolled over, wishing the bride to have many children. There is a sign: if a boy is rolled over these things, then the bride will have a girl, and vice versa. In the last 25 years, instead of things, they would give cash equivalent. Departing home, the participants of the rite wish everyone: “Muhraya tsaledirkab!” (“Let we meet only at weddings!”).

Having established the exact wedding day, they begin to get ready for it – they prepare firewood for the wedding bonfire and cooking, cut cattle for meat, bake bread.

A wedding fire was kindled in the evening. It was around it (from left to right) that the ancient ritual “Dance in the circle” (“*Shirla delkh*”) was carried out. The bonfire simultaneously illuminated the dancers and spectators at night and warmed them during the cold season (late autumn and winter).

A tent was set up in front of the house for a wedding celebration. Relatives, neighbors and friends from other villages and towns were invited to the wedding.

Since the mid-90s, the residents of the village Kuppa do not invite to the wedding – anyone who wishes comes. In Tsudahar, on the other hand, one can attend weddings only by invitation. In the last 20 years, weddings have been invited by invitation cards and even by phone.

A typical wedding counts from 300 to 700 people. Men and women, older and younger age groups sit separately.

Due to the fact that most modern weddings are held in the form of mawlid, some secular weddings are now held in the banquet halls of the district center of Levashi.

*Religious registration of marriage (“Mahar gabihni”).* Marriage and wedding are considered invalid if a mahar has not been concluded. It is usually held on the eve of the wedding on Thursday or Friday in the groom’s house or in the mosque. In the past, young people were not present at this ceremony, and they were replaced by their representatives – close relatives (“*vakil*” – proxy, man in charge) of the male sex (father, uncle, brother) and witnesses from both sides. In recent decades, young people are present at the conclusion of the mahar.

After conducting the *mahar* ceremony, the young, who have been called “*gyalmage*” from collusion to marriage, are now called “*tslikurte*” (the singular “*tslikuri*” – “groom”, “bride”). Starting from the Soviet era, in addition to the religious rite, civil marriage is also concluded in the registry office. It is concluded both before the wedding, during the wedding celebration and (most often) after it.

*Wedding (“meh”).* Until the 1960s, weddings were held after harvesting and field work, that is, in late autumn, or even in winter. Later, weddings began to be held in the summer (mainly in August) on Saturdays and Sundays.

The toastmaster (“*han*”), who has two deputies (“*nukerte*”), a herald (“*chavush*”) and performers (“*tirhhachibe*” – “people with sticks”), who ensure order at the wedding and in the dance circle, manages the course of the wedding. Traditionally, there were two musicians – playing the drum (“*tamruhchi*”) and the zurna (“*zinryavchi*”). Since the mid-1960s *zurna* gradually displaced the accordion. From the second half of the 1980s, pop ensembles playing national and electric musical instruments began to be invited to weddings from the cities of the republic. Until the early 1990s, there was practically no music at the wedding in the bride’s house. In recent decades, a wedding at the bride’s house is not much different from a wedding at the groom’s house. Regarding the repertoire of the wedding songs, it should be noted that epic, heroic and lyrical folk songs are performed in the Dargin, Avar and Russian languages.

Along with music and songs, the Tsudahar wedding was also accompanied with dances. For a long time, dancers from the villages of Tsudahar and Kuppa have been famous for their skill. In the past, the Tsudahars had a mass wedding dance “*hula gIyayar*” (“great hunt”) [19, pp. 275–276], which has not survived at the time under study. Now at weddings they dance the old “Dance in a circle” (“*shirla delh*”) and the Dagestan Lezginka. Until recently, the young men of the Tsudahar villages specially went to dance (and fight) at weddings in other villages of Tsudaharia, where the toastmaster always announced a dance for the guests.

Up until 1985, mummers were present at the weddings – “*kyapIu butsiIe*” (“masked wolves”) (Kuppa, Irgali), “*kyapIu kyatsne*” (“masked goats”) (Tsudahar, Arshi, Musulte, Karekadani) and “*murglalla darchi gyahursne*” (“women dressed in men’s clothes”). The former were only men dressed in old torn fur coats turned inside out. They wore cone-shaped felt masks with slits for the eyes and mouth on their heads. A mustache and nose were attached to the mask. On their feet, the mummers wore felt boots, the tips of which were bent up. The mummers amused the audience, frightened the children. They had sticks in their hands, with which they beat each other and the audience, whom they also sprinkled with flour and smeared with soot. Women-mummers were usually sisters, sisters-in-law or aunts of the groom aged 25 to 40 years. They changed into men’s clothes, attached moustaches and hung a dagger to their belts. Their faces were blackened with soot or they wore masks made of dough. By their behavior, women mummers imitated men. Their jokes were sometimes rude, and their actions were obscene. In this case, we are dealing with relics of orgiastic holidays [20, pp. 37–41], where the mummers were priests of the fertility cult [21, pp. 111–116].

Until the 1950s, the wedding dishes included: *hinkal* with boiled meat and mountain sausages; porridge made from barley flour (“*livlitli*”) cooked on apricot compote; bean soup with meat. Until the 1940s, a drink made from malt (“*min*”) and apricot moonshine (“*kurekkala gIyarki*”) were served. In the 1960s, the wedding feast became more diverse:

some borrowed dishes were served – pilaf, dolma, various soups, and tea for drinks. Later, in the 1970s, lemonade and beer appeared on the table. In the last 30 years, with the strengthening of the positions of Islam, alcoholic beverages are not consumed at weddings. In the last 25 years, the wedding table has become even more diverse and has been replenished with new dishes – meat and fish appetizers, salads, pastries, exotic fruits.

*The bride's arrival* (“*TsIikuri kari*”). In the past, the bride was sent for at midnight, and today – in the late afternoon. For this purpose, special young people led by men and women were assigned (“*tsIikuri chiz argIyaite*” – “the ones that go after the bride”). Until recently, they would go for bride on foot. They returned to the groom's house in the same manner. In the last 25 years, the groom's representatives have been going for the bride by luxury cars.

A bachelorette party is arranged in the bride's house (“*rurssi hIyadurrarkni*” – “the girl is being prepared”). Her friends are preparing her for the journey, helping her to put on a wedding dress, comb her hair.

Until recently, the bride's father and brothers at the time of the wedding were sent from the house to the neighbors. They appeared at the wedding only on the third day, when the groom's side invited them to visit. The bachelorette party and the send-offs were arranged by their close relatives. Today, they are present at the wedding.

The bride is escorted from her friend's house and handed over to the groom's side. When the bride is escorted from her parents' house, a handful of flour is thrown on her head with wishes for a long life together in prosperity (“*barakat*”). The bride is led to the groom's house by the “bride's companions” (“*tsIikkuri chible bakIayate*”) – a man and two women. They accompany the bride up to her entrance into the room of the young people on their wedding night, after which they leave.

On the way to the groom's house, they make sure that the bride does not turn back. In the opposite case, this would be considered as a wish to “return home”, that is, she will divorce. In front of the bride's escort, they used to carry a lighted lamp, which was supposed to scare away evil spirits. In the past, the bride was wrapped in a thick woolen shawl. It was only in 1985 that a veil appeared for the first time at Tsudahar weddings, which is now an obligatory element of the bride's wedding costume. On the wedding mawlid, the bride follows the religious dress-code.

On foot, with songs and dances, the procession goes to the groom's house. During the procession, one of the women carries the “bride's bag” (“*tsIikkurla tarbag*”), which contains pies, sweets, nuts and apricot pits, and presents them to people she meets with the words: “Here are the shares of the wedding for you.” Those who have received the treats wish the young the following: “May your marriage be blessed!”

On the way, on a narrow stretch of road, the escort is expected to be blocked, with demands to give “shares of the wedding” as a ransom. If the road is blocked by adults, then they are given a pie stuffed with meat and potatoes (“*chuttu*”), and if by young people – nuts, apricot pits and sweets.

The dowry was sent with the bride. In the past, it consisted of arable land, a garden (among the wealthy), a ram, a chest, carpets, dishes and bedding. Together with the dowry, they carried a “bride's pie” (“*tsIikkuri chuttu*”) stuffed with meat, dried sausage and cottage cheese. In the last 25 years, a cake replaced the pie. Until the 1950s, the dowry necessarily included a fur coat with long sleeves. Now the dowry includes home appliances, furniture, kitchen utensils, bedding and a chest with clothes. It is considered prestigious if the dowry includes an old buffet.



The moment the *bride enters the groom's house* (“*tsIikkuri huli garitsIahni*”), she is poured with nuts, apricot pits, sweets, coins, which are picked up by children. The bride is to cross the threshold with her right foot. The groom's mother treats the bride with a spoonful of honey with a blessing: “Live your life as sweet as this honey!”, after which the bride is led into the front room and seated in the right corner, where she sits, covered with a handkerchief, surrounded by friends. Closer to midnight, the bride is introduced into the room of the young, where the groom soon comes. In order not to interfere with the young people on their wedding night, the doors to their room are guarded by two friends of the groom, called “*burbutsayite*” (“the ones guarding the door”). Immediately after the performance of marital duties, the young people had to perform ablution before morning prayer.

Early in the morning, new clothes are brought to the bride, and the old ones are taken away. The bride hands the “shawl of innocence” to one of the women from the groom's side. The bride prepares “bride's dumplings”, which she treats the groom, his guardian friends and wedding guests. The groom then leaves for the friend's house. On the first day of marriage, the bride sits in the corner of the room, wrapped in a shawl, surrounded by friends. Guests visit the house to congratulate the young people and their parents on the wedding and receive the “wedding shares” – nuts and sweets.

*Bringing the bride to the spring* (“*TsIikuri shinne anrukni*”). On the third day of the wedding, the smartly dressed bride, accompanied by relatives and friends, goes to a public spring. Prior to their arrival, the youth of the village occupy the spring (“*gIinits butsiz*”) and do not let anyone near it without ransom. The bride and the accompanying girls and women give pies and sweets to those who “captured” the spring, after which they receive permission to fill the jugs with water. When the bride fills the jug, she is sprinkled with sweets, nuts, apricot pits, which are picked up by children. From that moment on, she can come to the spring alone and from now on is a full member of the family and rural society.

Unfortunately, this rite is no longer performed in most Tsudahar villages since the early 2000s.

*Invitations to entertainment with gifts* (“*Schittir vabarkni*”). The post-wedding ceremonies are concluded when the young people are invited by relatives of both sides, friends and neighbors, during which they are presented with household appliances, utensils and dishes.

The marriage and wedding ceremonies of the Tsudahars described above are also recorded in other sub-ethnic groups of Dargins and peoples of Dagestan overall, for example, among the Kaitags [22, p. 50–61], Andalal [23] and Gumbet [24, p. 70–81] Avars.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the modern Tsudahar marriage and wedding rituals demonstrates the preservation of almost all of the main stages, characters, rituals and customs of a traditional wedding. Echoes of various forms of traditional religious beliefs and ancient forms of marriage are found in the modern wedding ceremony of the Tsudahars. In the Soviet and post-Soviet times, a number of innovations were introduced to the wedding rituals: the bride's side was gifted with money instead of clothes and products; the appearance of a veil in the bride's costume; new dishes and drinks; a wedding escort of luxury cars.

In recent decades, there has been a tendency for the disappearance of some characters (mummers), rituals (bringing the bride to the spring), components (“circle dance”, alcoholic drink *min*, musical instruments *zurna* and *drum*) and the emergence of new characters (hired tamada, singers, dancers and musicians), dishes (dolma, pilaf, cake, salads), customs (replacement of real gifts with money, treating the groom’s friends with hinkal after the wedding night).

Since early 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the need to reduce material costs and the strengthening of the influence of religion led to the conduct of wedding *mawlids*, replacing the traditional wedding ceremony with a religious one. The main reason for the preservation or elimination of certain traditions, the introduction of innovations is due to political, socio-economic and cultural changes in public life, which directly or indirectly affect the wedding ritual.

Currently, despite the political instability and economic difficulties, there are real conditions for the revival of some of the original elements of the traditional Tsudahar wedding, which, in the context of globalization, would help preserve the national culture of the Dargins and other Dagestan peoples.

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